

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE BLACK-WHITE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Rehab Abumansour, Reem Al-Hajri, Sami Alsulami, Matt Brubaker, Brian Connor, Mark Gumm, Laura Inkrott, Nathan Keel, Katie McKinley, Patrick Kagai, Olfat Ruzzah
Carolyn S. Ridenour, Ed.D., and Pam R. Young, Ph.D.

Department of Educational Leadership
School of Education and Allied Professions
EDA556 Leadership in Diverse Communities



Brian Connor, Patrick Kagai, Reem Alhajri

ABSTRACT

The black-white achievement gap has challenged educators in the United States over many decades. Not only are some students disenfranchised by an educational system designed for all citizens, but the racial divide presents an unrelenting social justice failure. Test score data from the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) has been recorded for students aged 9, 13, and 17 from the late 1970s forward. While results showed some narrowing of the gap in 2007 compared with prior years, the gap continues to persist. During fall semester 2011, we (eleven Educational Leadership graduate students in EDA556 *Leadership in Diverse Communities*) studied the achievement gap by reviewing the statistical profiles in the NAEP data for specific ages in reading and math. We studied the strategies revealed in the metaanalysis of Ronald Ferguson, a Harvard professor and national leader in identifying strategies to ameliorate barriers to closing the gap. Individually, we developed plans to become advocates for making the black-white achievement gap a priority in our roles as aspiring school leaders with commitments to social justice. In this Stander Symposium 2012 poster presentation, we show the aggregated dimensions of those ideas: evidence-based efforts by school leaders to take on the injustices that continue to plague the schools led by those in the professional roles to which we aspire.

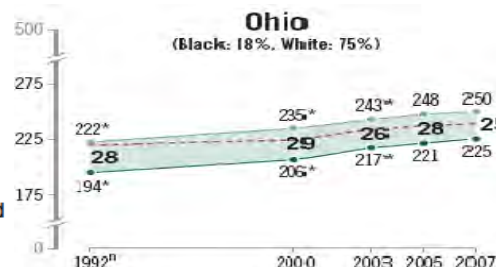


Top: Mark Gumm, Matt Brubaker, Nathan Keel
Bottom: Katie McKinley, Laura Inkrott



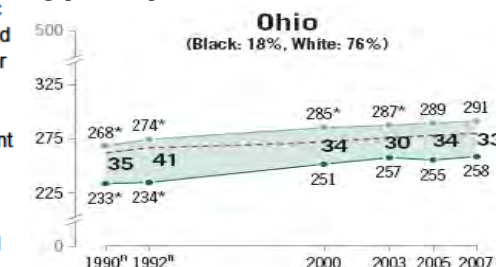
Front: Reem Alhajri, Katie McKinley, Laura Inkrott, Olfat Ruzzah
Back: Matt Brubaker, Nathan Keel, Brian Connor

The Gaps In Ohio



Grade 4

"The fourth-grade **mathematics** gap in 2007 was statistically significant in all 46 states for which data could be reported. The gaps ranged from 14 points in Hawaii and West Virginia to 54 points in the District of Columbia." (p. 13). In Ohio the gap was 25 points.



Grade 8

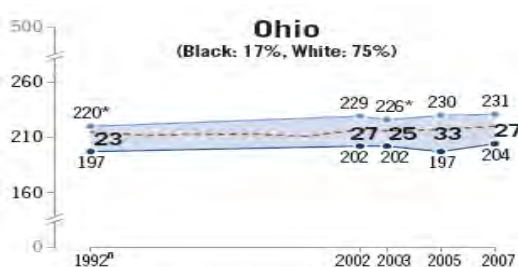
"The eighth grade **mathematics** gap in 2007 was statistically significant in all 41 states for which data could be reported. The gaps ranged from 16 points in Oregon to 51 points in Nebraska." (p. 21). In Ohio the gap was 33 points.



Olfat Ruzzah, Carolyn Ridenour, Rehab Abumansour

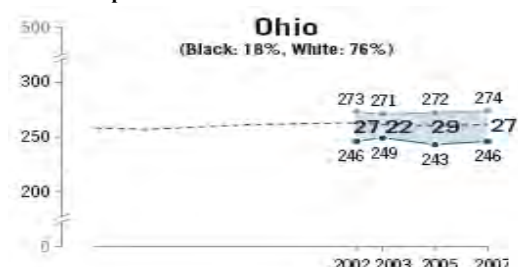


Patrick Kagai, Sami Alsulami, Mark Gumm



Grade 4

"The Black-White grade 4 **reading** gap in 2007 was significant in all 44 states for which data could be reported. The gaps ranged from 13 points in West Virginia to 67 points in the District of Columbia." (p. 35). In Ohio the gap was 27 points.



Grade 8

"In...41 states for which reliable data could be reported, differences in **reading** were statistically significant. The gaps ranged from 15 points in West Virginia and Nevada to 38 points in Wisconsin." (p. 43). In Ohio the gap was 27 points.



Pam Young, Olfat Ruzzah, Rehab Abumansour

Our Plans as School Leaders include:

More diagnosis of math and reading difficulties

Structure strong community – school linkages

Expand early childhood education

Create a stronger role for parents

Lengthen the school calendar

Embed cultural histories into teaching and learning

Build dimensions of culture/race/ethnicity into the curriculum

Strengthen the focus on best practices for low achieving students who have special needs (ESL, highly mobile, minimal reading, minimal out-of-school support, disabilities)

Get best and most highly qualified teachers into low-achieving schools

Teach cultural proficiency

Reward administrators who practice social justice advocacy

References

Ferguson, R. (2008). *Toward excellence with equity: An emerging vision for closing the achievement gap*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Lindsey, R. B., Robins, K. N., & Terrell, R. D. (2009). *Cultural proficiency: A manual for school leaders, 3rd ed.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2009). *Achievement gaps: How black and white students in public schools perform in mathematics and reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress: Statistical analysis report*. Washington DC: Institute of Educational Sciences.

State of Ohio Board of Education. (2003). *Toward high achievement for all students: The report of the state Board of Education closing achievement gaps task force*. Columbus, OH: Author